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RESEARCH SEMINAR IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND SOCIETY. FIRST INTERIM REPORT.

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REPORT NUMBER BR-6-8783 PUB DATE 15 APR 67
CONTRACT OEC-4-7-068783-2637
EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.36 7P.

DESCRIPTORS- *RESEARCH PROJECTS, *SEMINARS, *HIGHER EDUCATION, *SOCIAL STRUCTURE, LEADERSHIP, GRADUATE STUDY, RESEARCH PROPOSALS, PULLMAN,

THIS DOCUMENT IS AN INTERIM REPORT OF A 1967 SEMINAR HELD AT WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY. THE GOAL OF THE SEMINAR WAS TO PREPARE A SUBSTANTIVE PROPOSAL FOR FIELD RESEARCH CONCERNED WITH THE CULTURE AND STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AS IT IS NOW DEVELOPING IN AMERICAN SOCIETY. (HM)

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FIRST INTERIM REPORT
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Contract No. 4-7-068783-2637

Willis E. Sibley
Principal Investigator

April 15, 1967

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EA 001 047

FIRST INTERIM REPORT to the Research Branch, Office of Education Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Title: Research Seminar in Higher Education and Society. Office of Education Contract No. 4-7-068783-2637; Washington State University Contract No. 141-01-11A-2482-0007. Principal Investigator: Willis E. Sibley, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Department of Anthropology, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington 99163.

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Introduction. This Interim Report covers the period from the date of award on January 4, 1967 through April 15, 1967. It will be followed by a Final Report to be submitted on or before September 3, 1967. This report is limited to those activities accomplished prior to the commencement of the seminar on February 15, 1967 and to those partially completed activities of the seminar which is currently in progress.

Activities prior to beginning of seminar. Funds to support the seminar reported here were requested by written proposal to the Office of Education late in April of 1966. Despite verbal assurances that the proposal could be handled promptly under provisions for small projects (prime costs less than $7500), final Office of Education commitment for the project was not made until January 4, 1967, some eight months later. The importance of this delay will be evident in the following remarks.

Immediately upon receipt of notification of support, the principal investigator arranged for a special seminar (designated as Anthropology 511: Seminar in Higher Education and Society) to be offered during the Spring 1967 semester at Washington State University. Graduate students in the fields of Anthropology, Education, Psychology and Sociology were invited to apply for admission to the seminar, and notices of the seminar were distributed to other selected faculty in other academic departments. A research

assistant was employed to begin examination of Washington State University library resources on higher education research, a task which is still going on. Bound volume holdings of relevance are now listed on file cards, and work on research materials reported in professional journals and related periodicals is underway. The same research assistant has also been delegated the responsibility of transcribing tape recordings of each seminar session.

The principal investigator began allocation of his own time in January 1967 to developing a course outline, and to the selection of relevant readings for the initial sessions of the seminar. As part of this activity, the principal investigator spent nearly a week during a between-semesters break at the end of January 1967, in consultation and visits with members of the Center for Research and Development in Higher Education at the University of California, Berkeley. Persons consulted at length about their own research and plans for the seminar included Professor Martin Trow, Dr. J.G. Paltridge, Dr. Ernest Palola, Dr. Warren Martin and Mr. Terry Lunsford. In the course of the visit to the Berkeley research center, available manuscript and reprinted materials on Berkeley and WICHE projects relevant to the seminar were acquired.

Considerable time was allocated prior to the commencement of the seminar to arranging seminar visits by several leading researchers in the field of higher education. Persuading leading researchers in this field to come to Pullman to address the seminar on the very short notice possible, offered real difficulties. To date, two of three visitors committed for the seminar have already visited Pullman; their visits are described in a later portion of this report. Visits by Professor Burton Clark (Yale), Professor Edward Gross (Minnesota) and Professor Joseph Gusfield (Illinois) were arranged prior to the beginning of seminar sessions. All of them are national leaders in the study of the structure and culture of higher education in the United States. It has not been possible to arrange for a fourth visitor of their caliber,

as of the date of this writing.

The seminar. Because of very short notice that the seminar would be held, along with prior graduate program commitments on the part of numerous interested students, a total of four advanced graduate students registered for the seminar. In addition, one further graduate student has attended regularly and participated in the work of the group, despite the fact that prior program commitments prevented his registration. These students are enrolled ir graduate programs in Education, Sociology and Psychology. Aside from the formally enrolled students, five Washington State University faculty members from the fields of Anthropology, Education, Psychology and Sociology are regular participants in the seminar. The combination of faculty and student participants has created a very workable group, of a size nearly ideal for an exploratory seminar of this type.

The seminar was designed to explore existing relevant materials concerned with the structure and culture of American institutions of higher education; to discover what major gaps exist in published reports on higher education; to learn what research methodology (ies) might be most appropriate for further field studies; and to work out at least preliminary research proposals towards closing some of the gaps in our knowledge of internal structuring of institutions of higher education, their "culture", and institutional responses to the environments in which they operate. In addition, it was planned to invite several leading researchers in the field to address the seminar both about their own work and to discuss with the group what further research might be most relevant.

Consequently, the first several weeks of the seminar were devoted to lectures and discussions about major research so far accomplished. Among others, the published work of Burton Clark, T.R. McConnell, David Riesman,

John Millett, Martin Trow and Nevitt Sanford provided a basis for discussion' of the major outlines of institutions of higher education and present thinking and research findings about them. Emphasis was laid wherever possible upon the most resent findings of such groups as the Center for Research and Development in Higher Education at Berkeley, the WICHE Institutes, and the research group studying liberal arts colleges under the direction of Morris Keeton at Antioch College.

Following discussions designed to familiarize the seminar group with major features of the field under study, attention was turned next to an examination of organizational frames within which the institutions of higher education might be studied most fruitfully. Contemporary organizational theory has provided the basis for discussion in several seminar sessions. Preliminary research papers dealing with the applicability of organizational theory to understanding institutions of higher education were submitted by seminar registrants just prior to the spring vacation which is in progress as this report is written.

Seminar visitors. The first visitor to the seminar appeared on March 29, 1967. He was Professor Burton Clark, of the Department of Sociology, Yale University, and formerly a member of the Center for Research and Development in Higher Education at Berkeley. Dr. Clark spoke at length about his own past research into the culture and structure of American institutions of higher education, stressing particularly research results from his studies of liberal arts colleges of high quality, such as Swarthmore, Reed and Antioch. Further discussion ensued concerned with the appropriateness of alternative methodological approaches to a better understanding of how and why our institutions of higher education operate as they appear to do. Clark stressed the advantages of participant observation and analysis, following techniques more

traditional to the anthropologist than to the sociologist. His arguments suggested the necessity of learning thoroughly the context of institutional practices and behavior prior to the use of questionnaire techniques, in order to reduce the degree to which the use of questionnaires may arbitrarily eliminate perception of the real functioning of an institution both internally and in its relevant social, political or geographical environments.

The second seminar visitor appeared on April 5, 1967. He was Dr. Edward Gross, Professor of Sociology in the University of Minnesota. Dr. Gross discussed at length his research into the administration of higher education in some 68 major American universities. Though based heavily in responses to questionnaires concerning administrative goals for universities, his work also has involved participant observation in a limited number of institutions, as well as extensive research into the career trajectories of university administration members. The latter work was used to discover in detail value commitments, goals, and their expression in the total operation of large universities in America. Dr. Gross and his associate are now in the process of producing a several-volume report on the results of their research carried out over the past several years.

For the visits of Professors Gross andClark, selected additional faculty members at Washington State University were invited to seminar sessions. The purpose in inviting these additional faculty was to make them aware of contemporary research in the study of higher education, and to encourage their support of further research in this area.

Following the spring holiday at Washington State University, the seminar will be visited on April 19, 1967 by Professor Joseph Gusfield, of the Department of Sociology, University of Illinois. Professor Gusfield has been engaged in research in the sociology of education for a number of years, and will speak

particularly about his research findings concerning mid-western universities, some of which he has studied for a period of several years of rapid growth and change.

Subsequent to the visit of Professor Gusfield, members of the seminar will devote much of the remainder of the seminar to the development of research proposals. It is doubtful that these proposals will be of a form ready for submission for financial support, but they will provide a focus for our earlier discussions, directing the group toward a thorough examination of what we know, and what we still need to learn about the culture and values embodied in colleges and universities. It appears presently that our greatest lack of knowledge may lie in the area of the middle- to large-sized public university -- and in particular the state university.

The preceding remarks have been intended as a descriptive report of a seminar in higher education and society in America, now in progress at Washington State University. In the final report, to be prepared after the closing of the seminar, bibliographic materials, a completed seminar outline and reading list, and other relevant data will be submitted in detail.

It is hoped at this time that this seminar will result in the preparation of a larger substantive proposal for field research concerned with the culture and structure of higher education as it is now developing in American society. It is anticipated, however, that such a proposal would take a minimum of a year to prepare for submission. The current seminar is seen as a first step towards that goal, and current support by the Office of Education is gratefully acknowledged.